THE WORKS

THE WORKROOM Beltane 1996 No. 1 Vol. 2

Upcoming Workshops

May 23rd

16th: Blessed Bee!
7 PM The WorkRoom
A crafting bee for Pagan folk, the Pagan curious, and the Pagan friendly! Bring a current project and refreshments to share.

17th: A Witch's Brew
5 PM Sir George Williams
Learn to make herbal teas, tinctures, oils, ointments & more! Take home your own set of necessary tools.
Register by May 10th
$15 material fee

24th: Adventures in Gardening
5 PM Sir George Williams
Plant your very own herb garden in a pot! Learn to harvest & preserve your herbs. Seeds, soil & info on your herbs provided.
Register by May 17th
$10 material fee

31st: Divination IV
4PM Loyola campus of Concordia
No fuss divination!
Learn to scry without those expensive crystal balls, and experiment with dowsing.

June

4th: Pagan Justice I
9 PM Sir George Williams
The rites of Justice: a ritual for balance
Please register in advance

11th: Pagan Justice II
7:30 Sir George Williams
The skills of Justice
Learn professional techniques for problem solving & dealing with conflict.
Please register in advance

20th: Blessed Bee!
7:30 Location TBA
Our second monthly bee. Bring your projects, patterns & extra supplies for trading; bring a friend! Celebrate the solstice with us!

Date TBA: Herbs that Heal
Sir George Williams
Grandmother's Secret Remedies for Summer's Ails
Herbal remedies for insect bites, sunburns & various other summer hurts!

The WorkRoom:
Handmade with Love

Kitchen Witchery

It looks as if Beltane is going to cold and blustery again this year. In fact, it seems as though spring is going to come to us later than usual. But still, we Kitchen Witches can be planning our gardens, if not working in them, and we can all anticipate the warmer weather which is on its way - even if it has been delayed! If you're going to be making a trip to your local nursery in the next few weeks to buy your bedding plants you'll be able to bring a little of the colour and freshness of spring into your home and garden. And while you're shopping, why not keep in mind some new uses for your geraniums and pansies, and a neat way to add variety to your cooking: try cooking with edible flowers!

The best known among edible flowers are probably violets and roses, but there are dozens of others that are quite safe to cook with. Try pansies, geraniums and scented geraniums, marigolds, gladioli, chrysanthemums, nasturtiums, honeysuckle, lavender, borage, carnations, and freesia. Use them as garnishes for all kinds of dishes, add them to salads, or crystallise them and use them in desserts. You can even use them to make liqueurs, flavoured vinegars, jams and jellies!

Remember that flowers obtained commercially are often chemically treated. It's best to grow your own, but if you can't, check your sources carefully. Also be careful to identify your flowers carefully, since some flowers are toxic and might be confused with edible ones. Check a guide to edible flowers or an herb guide when in doubt!

Crystallising Flowers:
Because of the dangers associated with raw eggs, don't use egg whites to crystallize your flowers. Instead, make a thick paste from equal parts of gum arabic and rose water. Use the paste to paint petals or whole flowers, then dip them into superfine sugar. Leave in a warm place to dry; flowers can be stored in airtight containers for several months.

A Kitchen Witch Tip:
If you're looking for an alternative to composting, try another method for cutting down on organic waste: save your vegetable ends and peels for making soup stock! Throw them into a clean milk or juice carton in the freezer until you're ready to use them, then make up a big kettle of stock. If you're really good, you can manage to get the frozen veggies out and still leave the carton intact. The same method can also be used with meat scraps, or with fruit peelings for making juices, jellies or compotes. I like to save the water I use for cooking vegetables and pasta, too, and I use it for part of the liquid in making my soup stocks. Now there's reusing for you!

Herb Notes

Spring and summer are the best times to talk about and study herbs, since the plants can be found growing everywhere, from people's gardens to public parks, to vacant lots and alongside roads and highways. The WorkRoom will be offering a whole series of workshops on herbs for folks who would like to know more about them, how to grow them, and what to do with them once they've got them on hand.

In our first workshop for the season, learn how to prepare a variety of herbal products in "A Witches' Brew." We'll discuss techniques for making infusions, decoctions and cold extracts, tinctures and herbal oils and salves. The $15 fee covers the cost of essential tools you will need in your work with herbal preparations. The workshop is on Friday, May 17th at 5 PM & registration is a must!

On Friday, May 24th plant your very own herb garden in a pot! "Adventures in Gardening" is a workshop about growing herbs in pots, about harvesting your herbs and preserving them for later use. Soil and seeds will be provided; please bring your own pot (about 12" diameter & at least 6" deep.) A $10 fee will go to the purchase of materials. Please register in advance!

Our third workshop will introduce herbal first aid treatments, focusing on herbs in your own garden or spice cabinet. The class is absolutely free and the date and time will be announced at the beginning of June.

At MiniFest in August, we'll have two herb workshops among the offerings at the CUPS (Concordia University Pagan Society) workshop site, including one that will teach you the basics of plant anatomy and demystify all those strange sounding Latin names for you. And back at home, we'll also offer an herb walk in one of the city's public parks that will teach you the medicinal values of even the most despised of weeds!

Blessed Bee!

From the Middle English bene, meaning prayer or boon, comes the term "bee," applied to a gathering of folk with a single purpose. Our ancestors held quilting or sewing bees, and you may have been in a spelling bee when you were younger. But have you ever heard of a "Blessed Be"? Pagans use the expression "Blessed be!" in ritual and as a greeting. Combine the greeting with the tradition of the bee, and you get a social gathering for Pagans & other folk, where crafts are shared, patterns & recipes traded, supplies swapped, and a whole lot of fun is had by all. Teach your craft or learn a new one, meet likeminded folks, and most of all, "Blessed Bee!"

Bough Down:
Ebony *(Diospyros spp.)*

Ebony is a treasured wood with a long history of use, going back to ancient Greece and Rome, and before that to the palaces of the Egyptians and Phoenicians. Ebony was traditionally used with silver and gold for palace furniture, and also to make royal sceptres and images in India. It was a preferred wood for drinking cups, since it was thought to have an antagonism for poison!

Ebony generally comes to us from the East Indies and Sri Lanka, though there are American varieties, including persimmon, which most people know better for its fruit. In magick, the green fruits can be buried for good luck, or eaten by a girl who wishes to change her sex - according to tradition, she'll be a boy within two weeks if she does the spell right! Persimmon is also associated with good health.

Ebony is a hard, heavy wood whose most prized varieties are deep black in colour and consist only of heartwood. It is durable, and takes a high polish, making it a good choice for cabinetry, turning, inlaying, and of course, the keys of top-grade pianos. It does, however, dull tools very quickly and is somewhat difficult to work. This is part of the reason ebony articles are so expensive, the other factors being that the best ebony is imported, and of course that it is in high demand for quality work. Don't let the price scare you off, though. If you see an item of good quality made from ebony, it will last for a lifetime and it will keep a beautiful polish and smooth finish. Think of ebony for your wand or staff, or perhaps for an altar or table in your house. It's definitely worth the cost, and you'll be the only one on your block to have anything like it!

To learn more about ebony and other woods, check out our manual of woodworking, magickal and medicinal properties, described below.

Beltane

Beltane is the holiday also known as Walpurgis or May Day, and its date is May 1st. For the Celts, this was the first day of summer and, a fertility festival celebrated with magick that would ensure good crops, healthy cattle, and prosperity in general. The people would dance the May Pole and leap over bonfires to ensure good health, or to obtain a boon from the gods. It was also a time for making love in the fields, and of greenwood marriages, the ancestor of our modern one-night stand, though celebrated in honour of the Horned God. Children conceived at the Beltane fires were regarded as special, and were referred to as children of the God.

In Roman times, Beltane was celebrated as Floralia, games dedicated to the Goddess Flora, the wife of Zephyrus. She presided over flowers and gardens, and enjoyed perpetual youth. Her celebration was marked by merry making and great sexual licentiousness.

In the Works

The WorkRoom is busy with a variety of projects, including preparing for MiniFest and organizing this year's MiniBus. Willow is now offering Tarot readings at Le Mélange Magique, 1928 Ste. Catherine W., on Sundays and Mondays. Tea leaf readings on Saturdays should begin late May.

Ironwood is hard at work on several new items, including rune sets, and blank runes for those who would like to paint or carve them on their own. A manual on the woodworking, magickal and medicinal properties of various trees, entitled *Trees from the Sacred Grove*, is also in the works. The first volume, dealing with hardwoods, will be available in May. To our knowledge, no such book exists as yet, and we hope it will be a valuable addition to your library!

For more information on any of our activities, please get in touch. You can reach both Willow and Ironwood by phone at the WorkRoom, from noon to 9 PM daily. Call 769-7853.